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Rebels propose talks with Sandinistas

Around the Americas

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WASHINGTON — A CIA-supported Nicaraguan rebel group Thursday proposed a "patriotic and civilized dialogue" with the leftist Sandinista government to end what it called a civil war in the Central American country.



Calero

It was the FDN's first major proposal for negotiations since it launched military actions in Nicaragua in March of last year, with covert CIA aid.

The FDN letter to the Contadora foreign ministers proposed that the dialogue with the Sandinistas take place in Caracas, Venezuela, with ranking representatives of the Contadora countries in attendance.

In a related development, the United States said it vetoed a \$2.2-million Inter-American Development Bank loan to Nicaragua but denied the decision was political.

State Department spokesman Alan Romberg indicated that the loan was blocked because of Nicaragua's unstable economic situation.

Romberg also said that although he was not aware of the FDN proposal for negotiations, the administration favors dialogue to settle conflicts in Central America.

A Nicaraguan diplomatic source in Washington dismissed the FDN proposal as a propaganda ploy "engineered by the United States to legitimize the activities of the counterrevolutionaries."

The source also speculated that the FDN is offering to begin a dialogue because it may be in trouble militarily within Nicaragua.

An FDN spokesman, Adolfo Calero, rejected

this, saying the FDN proposal should not be taken as a sign of weakness. However, Calero said the FDN will call a ceasefire if negotiations get under way and begin showing progress. "A ceasefire without any commitments from the Sandinista government, not even the acceptance of dialogue, would be senseless," he said.

"We are absolutely certain that the possible international conflict that the Contadora Group is attempting to avert is the result of internal conflicts which the FDN is willing to discuss openly, without prior conditions, through a patriotic and civilized dialogue with the Sandinista government," the FDN letter said.

"We request that you [the Contadora Group] sponsor in Caracas a dialogue between representatives of the [Sandinista government] and those of the FDN to discuss the terms to end the civil war and establish the peaceful coexistence of all Nicaraguans in a free democracy."

Calero said the FDN would carry a 12-point agenda to the negotiating table including demands for elections, the departure of Cuban and Eastern bloc military advisers from Nicaragua, revocation of a state of emergency, reorganization of the Sandinista security forces and repatriation of Nicaraguan exiles.